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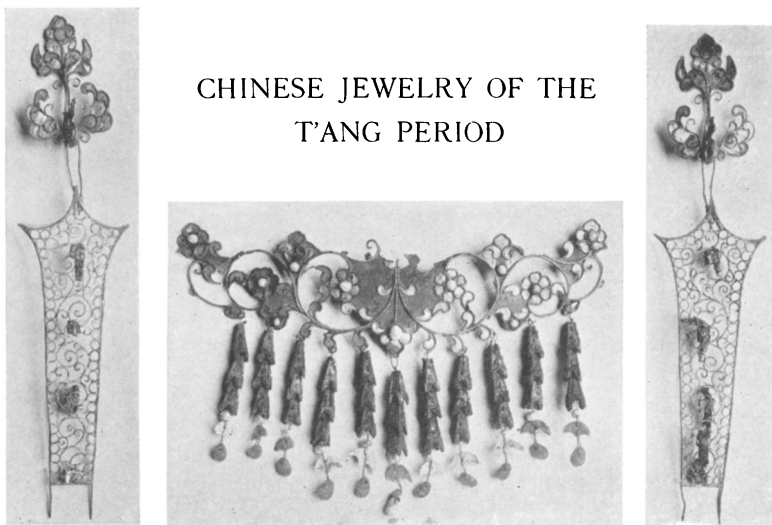
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CHINESE JEWELRY OF THE T'ANG PERIOD



CHINESE GOLD HAIR ORNAMENTS SAID TO COME FROM THE
TOMB OF AN EMPRESS OF THE T'ANG PERIOD

It is practically useless to try to find the provenance of Chinese pieces which have passed through the hands of one or more dealers, particularly if these objects are tomb finds; the finder is not anxious to let others know where his profitable hunting-grounds lie, and the opening of tombs which may contain the remains of one's own ancestors is not considered the proper thing to do in China.

The gold jewelry and the silver ornaments which the Museum has acquired are said to come from the tomb of an empress of the T'ang period. It sounds well, the phoenixes which surmount a pair of delicate filigree hair ornaments give some color to the attribution, but we have no more convincing proof. That the jewelry dates from the T'ang period is clear, however, from the style and design, while the state the pieces were in is evidence of their having been found under ground. It would seem that a box or casket had contained the jewelry; the box, probably wood or lacquer, had decayed and the silver ornaments which were found, one simple hairpin excepted, were the thin silver inlay of the casket.

It has been possible to reassemble the pieces of five hair ornaments and a number of rosettes and small floral sprays. The

rosettes and flowers were probably sewn on garments or headdresses. The silver inlay consisted of four different groups varying in detail, and each group has been mounted on a panel, arranged as much as possible in the style of the period. Small pieces were missing and others could not be fitted in; the latter may have belonged to the cover of the box of which not enough remains for reconstruction.

The five pieces of gold jewelry which could be readily put together had been mounted on bronze supports of which some are of the nature of hairpins. Parts of these remained attached to the backs, also the loops in which these supports were fixed. Of these five pieces, three consist of floral ornaments, a center piece and two side sprays; the flowers are made of cells which must have been filled with colored paste, stones, or pearls—one small green stone remained in place. The unpierced pearls which were found with the jewelry have been placed in the centers of the flowers. It is curious to notice that these pearls and the small pierced ones belonging to the hangers have lost very little of their color and brilliancy, though decayed to the point that the least pressure reduces them to powder.

The groundwork of the design and some

of the borders are covered with tiny gold beads, a decoration very like what is found on early Greek jewelry. At the lower edge are small loops from which evidently pendants hung. Small bronze-gilt hangers, which are decorated with tiny gold beads similar to those on the jewelry itself, crescent-shaped mother of pearl ornaments (some of which still adhered to the bronze hangers), perforated glass beads, and seed pearls, have been restrung and hung from the gold loops as a tentative restoration, probably but not certainly correct.

The two other gold ornaments have remained intact; on top of a long square piece of filigree work perch charming little phoenixes made like the ornaments described above of cell-work which must also have contained colored stones or paste.

The five pieces together seem to have formed an ornament for the head, the kind of ornament which we see on stone sculpture of the period and, less pure in style, on the posthumous portraits of the Ming period.

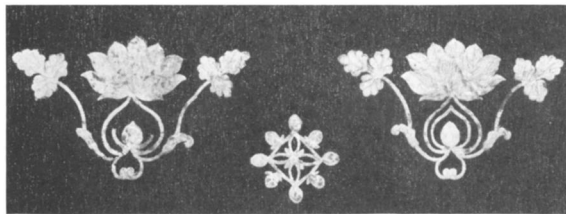
Besides these there is quite a number of

very similar small flowers and gold rosettes in different sizes and designs; a number of small ones are exactly like those in the Shosoin treasure house in Nara on a Nyoi, a staff used by Buddhist priests.¹ These rosettes may have been used in a similar way or they may have been fastened on garments.

Together with these pieces is shown a small round plaque which was acquired from another source and which is independent of the jewelry previously described. It is of charming minute workmanship, in many respects similar to the much earlier Egyptian jewelry; the tiny gold cells contain a number of the original colored stones—carnelian, lapis lazuli, and turquoise—cut in shapes to fill the cells. The ornamental band round the center shows the grape-vine design and has the same filling of tiny gold beads which we find on the other jewelry. The gold ornament is mounted on a flat bronze disk.

S. C. B. R.

¹See Toyei Shuko, *Illustrated Catalogue of the Imperial Treasury Shosoin*. Plates 184-186.



TYPICAL EXAMPLES OF THE SILVER INLAY
PROBABLY FROM A CASKET CON-
TAINING THE GOLD JEWELRY